

April 6th, 2016

Dr. David Caldwell
Chair of Search Advisory Committee
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX

Dr. Caldwell,

I appreciate your recent inquiry regarding the search for Professor and Head of the Department of Animal Science at Texas A&M University. This Department is the premier Animal Science program in the country, and the chance to lead this Department would be a tremendous professional opportunity. I would like to be considered as a potential candidate for the position.

Currently, I serve as Professor and Head of the Department of Animal Science at the University of Arkansas where I am responsible for faculty recruitment and development, instructional program development and delivery, coordination of departmental research and Extension programs, and evaluation of personnel delivery of service programs. I represent the department's interest within and outside the University and maintain relationships with students, administrators, University committees, alumni, professional organizations, and various other public and private groups. In partnership with the Division of Agriculture and Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences, I develop the department's annual budget request, and administer expenditure of the allocated funds and other resources available to the department.

In 2002, I joined the USDA-Agricultural Research Service (ARS) as Research Animal Scientist. I conducted independent research in the area of growth and development, physiology, and nutrition of grazing cattle. I assembled and led or co-led numerous multi-disciplinary research teams. As Location Lead Scientist of the Food Animal Production National Program, I was responsible for program stewardship, oversight, and accountability for approximately one million dollars in funding for partnerships between ARS and University of Missouri, Oregon State University, and University of Arkansas. I fostered team building and strategic long-term planning (5 year projects). I ensured those partnerships were cooperative in nature, mission relevant, properly budgeted, monitored, and completed in accordance with the terms and conditions of the agreement. In recognition of my research efforts, I was awarded the USDA-ARS, Herbert L. Rothbart Outstanding Early Career Research Scientist award as well as the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers.

During my USDA-ARS career, I also held Adjunct Faculty status in the Department of Animal Science and membership in the Graduate Faculty at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. I co-advised six M.S. and three Ph.D. graduate students. Further, I served as Adjunct Faculty in

the Biological Sciences Department, University of Arkansas, Ft. Smith (UAFS) where I instructed Anatomy/Physiology and Biological Science courses (a total of 20 semesters). My teaching efforts were recognized with the American Society of Animal Science Outstanding Young Animal Scientist Award for Education and the UAFS Luella M. Krehbiel Teaching Excellence Award.

Serving as Extension Dairy Specialist (80% Extension, 20% research) at New Mexico State University (NMSU), my responsibilities included developing and delivering formal and informal educational programs for producers, county Extension faculty, and allied industry personnel. I instructed Dairy Production, Dairy Cattle Judging, New Mexico Dairy Production and Processing courses, and Special Topics. I participated in the NMSU Undergraduate Mentoring Program and directed the research and thesis of four M.S. students.

My diverse service record, including serving as the current President of the American Society of Animal Science, has afforded me valuable insight into several challenges that face Animal Science Departments and the animal industry in general. I have developed an understanding of how to access extramural funds through my own grantsmanship as well as my service on numerous funding organizations including USDA/CSREES (NRI, now AFRI and SBIR) and 1890's Capacity Building grants programs. To ensure relevance of research and Extension/outreach activities to stakeholders, I have always been committed to fostering strong relationships between livestock producers and the Department through active involvement in numerous producer-associated groups. My coordination of multi- and interdisciplinary research projects is evidence of my ability to develop effective teams that identify pertinent production strategies. Participation in youth programs (e.g., county/state fairs, 4-H and FFA events) has provided me the opportunity to promote a better understanding of science to cultivate future generations of animal scientists.

Departments of Animal Science are confronted with numerous challenges as they look to the future including budget reductions, changes in research priorities, shifts in demographics, increased use of technology, and increased demand for public accountability. Although there are challenges, it is an exciting time to be involved in the animal sciences! At no other time in history have so many people depended on so few for food production, and at no other time have animals contributed so meaningfully to enhancing human life by providing companionship, recreation, and human wellbeing. The future sustainability of any program depends on recruitment and retention of the brightest undergraduate and graduate students that will produce our nation's food and develop applicable technologies to enhance the efficiency and sustainability of animal agriculture. The curriculum, including web-based course work, must continue to be evaluated, modified and broadened as necessary to meet the changing needs of students and the state. Recruitment programs must be diverse and reach new populations of students without ignoring the traditional base of farm and ranch students. I have always been committed to implementing programs that provide all students with international experiences.

The greatest asset of any program is its personnel, and it is imperative that resources are allocated fairly to make sure faculty can achieve their research, Extension, and teaching goals. Accomplishment of these goals requires creativity, dedication, and a balanced portfolio of funding that includes appropriated funds (both state and federal), grants/contracts, and self-generated funding. Novel funding opportunities to expand technology transfer to stakeholders is necessary. Partnerships with other agencies and institutions must be a vital part of our portfolio. I feel it is the Head's responsibility to serve as the principal advocate for the faculty to the higher administration. I am committed to the recruitment and retention of excellent faculty that will enhance the missions of the Department.

As fewer people are directly involved with animal agriculture, I believe the Department's role is as a facilitator of scientific exchange among academia, industry, and government agencies. We must use the Department's close relationships with local, national, and international stakeholders to continually enhance the relevance and profile of the Department's research, teaching, and Extension programs. This is essential to further strengthen the voice of Texas A&M Animal Science as a world leader in scientific information, as well as safeguard the integrity of the animal science community.

I feel my administrative and supervisory experience provides me with valuable leadership qualities. Further, my experience in teaching, Extension, and research, as well as my strong personal skills and capacity to communicate with diverse groups of people (e.g., livestock producers, students, and faculty) gives me the ability to be a fair and effective department head. The Department Head should cultivate a culture of openness and trust that makes an enjoyable workplace atmosphere. As a Department, we must continue to evolve and adapt to current and future local, national, and global conditions. The rich heritage and tradition of the Department of Animal Science is globally recognized. I would like the opportunity to be a part of such an eminent program. I feel that I have the qualifications and experience to help in these endeavors and would like the opportunity to be of service to the Department of Animal Science at Texas A&M.

Attached for your consideration is my CV with specific accomplishments and a list of professional references. If you have need of any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Michael L. Looper
Professor and Head
Department of Animal Science